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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the relationship between success or non-success among siblings and their self-esteem levels and childhood family experiences. Thirty subjects divided in 15 subgroups of male and female siblings were studied; success was defined by membership in the country club. A three-part self-administered questionnaire was given to each sibling. Family environment, self-esteem levels, and various biographical data were assessed in each of the pairs. A comparative analysis was conducted to distinguish between effective and non-effective child-rearing techniques in promoting future success. Also self-esteem levels and childhood experiences were compared in relation to occupational success. The results suggested that self-esteem affects one's occupational success in a given context. Those siblings considered more successful had higher self-esteem. Family environment did not affect occupational success and did not correlate with self-esteem. (The questionnaire is appended.) (AA)

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A Comparative Study of Occupational Success Among Siblings: Differences in Child Rearing Behavior

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Running Head = Sibling Occupational Success

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between successful and non-successful siblings with their corresponding self-esteem levels and child rearing experiences. Using correlational analysis for dependent samples (n=15 per group), significance was achieved for self-esteem ($t(14) = 3.3$, $p < .01$). Those who were considered to be the more successful sibling, elicited a higher self-esteem score. Significance was not achieved for the remainding hypotheses. Family environment did not correlate with current occupational success ($t(14) = 1.7$, $p > .01$), nor did the two variables of self-esteem and family environment correlate with one another $t(29) = .28$, $p .> .01$).
It was concluded that heightened self-esteem prevailed in achieving occupational success.

A Comparative Study of Occupational Success Among Siblings: Assessing Differences in Child Rearing Behavior

A great deal of attention has been devoted to studying the factors relating to one's occupational success. Such researched variables include motivation levels, aspirations, affective reactions, self-esteem, and past behavioral patterns. Since all of these variables are developed during childhood, it is surprising that such little research has been done to examine child rearing behavior in relation to occupational success. Nearly all of the existing research examining success is conducted on a single, individual level. In order to truly examine the pertinent and forecasting factors contributing to success, one should compare a sibling's childhood experience against that of his/her siblings'.

Since the family is perhaps the most influential context for developing the child's self-concept and belief system, the parental subsystem holds the greatest amount of power in establishing future success for the child. As adequate control, acceptance, and affection is given by the parental subsystem, the child emerges with higher self-esteem levels (Peterson, 1983). Furthermore, as the parents teach

independence and autonomy, the child's self-efficacy level, that is, his/her capability of dealing with social or physical environments, is heightened. Gecas & Schwalbe (1986) replicated Peterson's findings and continue to say that positive evaluation of a child by the parent (which includes support, participation, and interest) relate to a heightened self-esteem level. With this early parental instillment of self-esteem, the child is set forth into the world with a secure sense of him/herself. Other important variables are able to surface in promoting future occupational success after this secure sense of self is instilled. For example, Vallerand & Blais (1991) examined the effects of self-related affects in achievement situations. They found that self-related affect, the core elements of the individuals self-concept and self-esteem systems, may affect how an individual perceives ability and proficiency in certain domains and in how they view themselves. A number of studies follow up with this belief and found that the theory also applies in reverse. That is, internal attributions for success produce positive self-related affects. Deci and Ryan (1985) also studied intrinsic motivation and self-determination in humans. Feelings of

competency produce increases in intrinsic motivation, whereas feelings of incompetency lead to decreases in intrinsic motivation. Thus one's self-esteem levels contribute to one's occupational success.

Regarding past behavior, which is also influenced by the parental subsystem, a person who is highly motivated will be less accepting of failure in a given context; failure is less attributed to one's ability and more to situation with high motivators, and vice versa with low-motivators (Scapinello, 1989). So depending on the way a parent reacts to the child's success or failure may set a precedence for his/her future behavior.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis to distinguish between effective and non-effective child-rearing techniques in promoting future success. One's self-esteem levels and past child-rearing experiences are compared in relation to current occupational success. It is hypothesized that a) siblings who are successful in their lives now, will report more rewarding childhood experiences than do their less-successful siblings, b) siblings who are more successful will report higher self-esteem levels than their less successful siblings, and thus c) there is a

significant relationship between one's family environment and self-esteem scores.

METHOD

Subjects:

There were thirty subjects total; fifteen subgroups of males and female siblings. In order to account for success, a criterion for success was established. Success is defined by membership into the country club. On the roster, the individual's name, occupation title, residence, and sibling occupation title was given. The subject found on the roster was viewed as "the successful sibling," and was coded as "A," or the successful sibling in the subgroup. Each "a" person was randomly selected from the entire list of 250 members. Each "a" subject was male. Regarding the other sibling, labeled as "b," or the less successful sibling, inquiries were made by myself with the successful subject about his sibling's occupational status. That sibling was then contacted by phone, and sent a questionnaire. Only two "b" subjects were female.

Instruments:

A self-administered questionnaire was given to each

sibling in a sibling group. There were three parts to the questionnaire. The first assessed family environment (questions adapted from Moos, and Moos, 1981), which contained 29 questions. The second part assessed current self esteem levels (questions adapted from Coopersmith, 1983) which consisted 11 questions, and the third section asked various biographical data, such as date of birth, number of siblings, current occupation, perceived success and futuristic hopes of success, and others. There were ten questions total for biographical data. The established measures contained more questions than were reported in my consolidated measure of self-esteem and family environment. Certain questions were therefore eliminated from the original scales because I believed they were irrelevant in this context. The reliability and validity scales for the total instruments yielded favorable scores. The internal consistency scores for each subscale ranged from .64 to .78. Test-retest scores for 4 months yielded a score of .78, and for 12 months yielded a score of .71. Predictive validity for the SEI produced a score of .53. The Kuder-Richardson (20) reliability test produced a score of .74 for male college students, and .71 for female college students.

Behavioral observations were recommended to supplement the technical support for each measure.

Since the instrument was self-administered, the subject was simply asked to follow instructions that read:

> This questionnaire is a part of a study to examine various relationships between one's childhood experiences and current economical and psychological functioning. It will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete this questionnaire.
>
> The first section will ask you various questions about your childhood experiences, the second part will examine your views of yourself, and the third section will ask you various biographical questions.
>
> Because I will be using an identification number, and not your name, the anonymity of your responses is guarded. Therefore, you are encouraged to be as honest and open as possible. If at any time you do not feel comfortable with the survey, you are under no obligation to complete it. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

RESULTS

Three t-tests for dependent samples (=.01) were conducted on self-esteem scores for sibling groups, family environment scores for groups, and the sum of both family environment with self-esteem for groups. Results for family environment, and the total score of family environment and self-esteem failed to reach significance. The results for

the self-esteem measure however, did reach significance. Therefore, only the second hypothesis, that self-esteem differs considerably between subgroups, was supported.

Table 1

Self-esteem statistical support

	Successful siblings	Less successful siblings	t
M	9.7	8.5	3.3
SD	.98	1.1	

n=15
p<.01

Table 2

Family environment statistical support

	Successful siblings	Less successful siblings	t
M	19.9	18.7	1.7

SD	3.0	3.5

n=15
p>.01

Table 3

Family environment and self-esteem statistical support

	Family environment	Self-esteem	t
M	19.3	9.1	.28
SD	3.3	1.2	

n=30
p>.01

Discussion

The results of this study support the second hypothesis that self-esteem does relate to current occupational success. Those that scored high on the self-esteem measure were more successful in their occupation than their sibling counterpart. Therefore the research of Vallerand & Blais, and Deci and Ryan were supported. One's self-related affect, whose primary component is self-esteem, affects one's competency (occupational success) in a given context. However, the first and third hypotheses failed to reach significance. The correlation among family members for family environment was $t(14) = .68$, $p < .05$, which is

significant. Which means that family responses are similar but the t-test for family environment shows that the responses do not relate to occupational success. The t-test for the total measure also yielded insignificant results, indicating that the two variables, self-esteem and child-rearing do not go together. Gecas & Scwalbe's (1986) findings that a strong family environment (which includes support, independence, and positive evaluation) produces heightened self-esteem levels. Interpretations for such results may be found in the measure itself. There were only 11 questions offered to figure a total self-esteem measure, and only 29 questions to measure family environment. Each question measured a particular construct, and several questions, when summed, formed a total score for that construct. For my study, I chose only the pertinent questions that I felt, related to one's total esteem and family behavior. Therefore, the measure, unless if used in its entirety, may not be reliable or yield the appropriate results in this context.

One point worth mentioning is the fact that those subjects who were coded as successful were quite modest in comparing their status amongst their siblings. Each subject

was required to answer the question, "How would you compare your occupational success amongst your siblings?" They were to choose from a) most successful, b) moderately successful, and c) least successful. Surprisingly, 70% of those coded as successful (i.e., members of the country club) responded by marking "moderately successful" compared with one's siblings. Likewise, the less successful siblings resoundingly marked "least successful" (38%) or "moderately successful" (47%). My interpretation being that a) the successful siblings honestly don't consider themselves to be "that" successful in their occupation and therefore can't compare themselves with their sibling's success, or b) they don't consider their siblings as less successful then themselves. Perhaps the notion of competition lies with the less successful individual and not that of the more successful individual. Weiner (1985) states that subjective perceptions of performance are thought to represent an instance of intuitive appraisal, and reflective appraisal. Reflection involves intellectual comparisons which consider one's self, the outcome and social variables. The reflective appraisal serves to augment, maintain, or minimize the effects of intuitive appraisal. Therefore, it appears that

the successful and less successful siblings have different reflective assessment techniques. The more successful sibling may use more of a maintenance or minimizing technique, and the less successful sibling may augment his/her feelings of failure. One's self-esteem is heightened when success is accounted for, and it is lowered when success is unsubstantiated. Weiner (1985) also states that individuals are more self-focused after failure than after success. As a result, the less successful sibling is more critical and cutting than his/her counterpart. A sense of learned helplessness is seen as a result of his/her self-esteem scores.

In the future, more research should be done in all areas of this study. Perhaps a better measure, and a more exorbitant sample should be used. Also, more women should be included to assess gender differences. It may be interesting to look at how each sibling, successful or not, attributes his/her success or failure. Whether it be to one's own ability or contextual circumstances.

Childhood is the foundation that each one of us carries throughout our lives. Whether our experiences were seen as beneficial or detrimental, those lasting impressions are

conveyed throughout our daily routines. Knowing what crucial variables perpetuate one's future success can be a powerful levering technique used by future parents, teachers, helping professionals, and children themselves.

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Appendix A

You will be filling out a questionnaire regarding certain childhood experiences, your current views of yourself, and your economic and occupational accomplishments.

Consent

This questionnaire is a part of a study designed to examine various relationships between one's childhood experiences and current economical and psychological functioning. It will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Because I will be using an identification number, and not your name, the anonymity of your responses is insured. Therefore, you are encouraged to be as honest and open as possible. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with the survey, you are under no obligation to complete it. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

_____

Your signature

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This first section will cover questions about your family life when you were growing up. Please answer these questions as they related to you as an adolescent.

True False

1. My family has supported and helped me with my occupational aspirations.
2. We fought a lot in our family.
3. We felt it was important to be the best at whatever we did.
4. We could say anything we wanted to around home.
5. We were encouraged to be independent.
6. Getting ahead in life was very important in our family.
7. There were very few rules to follow in our family.
8. I was recognized more for my accomplishments in our family.
9. I was recognized more for my failures in our family.
10. There was always one sibling who stood out from the rest.
11. There was a feeling of togetherness in our family.
12. We were encouraged to talk about our personal problems.
13. We believed in competition and "may the best man win."
14. Our family often criticized others.
15. We rarely had intellectual conversations.
16. Our family "backed each other up."
17. Our family rarely worried about job promotions, school grades, etc.
18. Everyone had an equal say in family decisions.
19. I felt "favored" in our family.
20. I felt "neglected" in our family.
21. We never tried that hard to succeed in our family.
22. We got along well with each other.
23. We were careful about what we said to each other.
24. Family members often tried to one-up or out-do each other.
25. It was hard to be myself without hurting someone else's feelings in our household.
26. Rules for me, were pretty inflexible in our household.
27. There was plenty of time and attention for everyone in our family.
28. We were not encouraged to speak up for ourselves in our family.
29. Family members were often compared with others as to how well they were doing in work or school.

The second section looks at your beliefs about yourself as a person now. Please answer these as honestly as possible.

Like Me	Unlike Me	
		1. Things usually don't bother me.
		2. I often wish I were someone else.
		3. There are lots of things about myself I'd change if I could.
		4. I'm fun to be around.
		5. My family considers my feelings.
		6. My family expects too much of me.
		7. It's difficult to be me.
		8. Things are all mixed up in my life.
		9. I have a low opinion of myself.
		10. I often get discouraged with what I am doing.
		11. I can't be depended on.

The last section covers general biographical data about yourself.

1. You are:
   Male
   Female
2. Your date of birth: / /
3. How many
   brothers
   and/or sisters do you have?
4. Are you a twin?
   Yes
   No
5. Are you the:
   first
   middle
   last child
6. Your families occupational status when you were growing up would be categorized as:
   Service
   (professional, administrative, managerial, proprietor)
   Intermediate
   (clerical, small proprietor, self-employed, artisan, technical foreman)
   Working
   (manual worker in industry, agricultural)
   Other
7. Do you consider yourself "occupationally successful" at this time in your life?
   Yes
   No

8. How would you categorize your occupational status:
   Service
   Intermediate
   Working
   Other
9. Do you have higher aspirations for your career?
   Yes
   No
10. How would you compare your occupational success amongst your siblings:
   Most successful
   Least successful
   Moderately successful

Thank you again for completing this survey.